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SUBJECT: UKRAINE: SCENESETTER FOR UNDERSECRETARY SEGA

Classified By: Ambassador for reasons 1.4(a,b,d).

11. (SBU) Undersecretary Segal: We look forward to welcoming you to Kyiv. For more than seven weeks Ukraine has been in political turmoil and paralysis as the President and Prime Minister search for ways to reach agreement on a date for pre-term parliamentary elections and a way forward on resolving contradictions in a newly-amended constitution that came into force in 2006 with existing law. During your Kyiv meetings, I recommend that you raise the following themes with your counterparts:

-- Good Partners: Ukraine has been a good partner and we hope it will remain so in the future. We appreciate Ukraine's ongoing and past contributions to coalition operations and Ukraine's support for U.S. policies/operations in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. We look forward to strengthening our relationship.

-- As appropriate, you may wish to reiterate our position on the current political crisis. Our approach is that the problem is Ukraine's to solve, but we urge all parties to take responsibility for their supporters and not permit street demonstrations to deteriorate into violence. We support a solution to the current crisis that is consistent with Ukraine's recent democratic past.

President and PM Continue to Search for Agreement

12. (SBU) Ukraine may be heading into early parliamentary elections sometime this year as the continuing political power struggle between President Yushchenko on the one hand and PM Yanukovich's Cabinet and the Rada (parliament) on the other has led to deadlock within the government. In the two years and a half since the Orange Revolution and Viktor Yushchenko became President, Ukraine has been feeling its way forward on democratic development and Euro-Atlantic integration. Internecine squabbling in the Orange camp slowed reform in key areas during Yushchenko's first 18 months in office. In March 2006, Ukraine held fully free and fair Rada elections for the first time since independence; after months of political wrangling, a new coalition emerged in August to form a government led by PM Yanukovich, Yushchenko's 2004 opponent.

13. (SBU) Poorly-crafted new constitutional amendments, introduced in January 2006, created ambiguities in the division of authority between the President and PM, leading to the current political power struggle. This conflict came to a head in early April when Yushchenko issued a decree disbanding the Rada and calling for preterm parliamentary elections. The Rada and Prime Minister ignored the decree and appealed to the Constitutional Court for a ruling on its constitutionality--the Court has not yet issued an opinion.

Both sides initially turned their supporters onto the streets, but the President and PM reached a general agreement on May 4 to hold early parliamentary elections and implement certain legislative changes that President Yushchenko wanted, although the date for a new vote is still a point of contention. Security, military, and law enforcement structures have been careful to remain professional and outside this fray. Our policy is not to prescribe an outcome to the Ukrainians, but we have urged all sides to refrain from violence and to seek a solution consistent with Ukraine's democratic norms.

¶4. (SBU) Despite all the political maneuvering, Yanukovych and Yushchenko share a strategic goal of Ukraine joining the EU and NATO, although they differ on timing and tactics. For example, Yanukovych in a key speech at NATO last September 14 made clear Ukraine supported deepened cooperation with NATO and an information campaign about NATO but would not ask for a Membership Action Plan (MAP), as desired by Yushchenko and Defense Minister Hrytsenko. While defense reform has continued forward progress, wider security sector reform has been slowed by the political wrangling and the return of a number of reform-averse figures to the Ministry of Interior in particular.

Other Issues of Interest: NATO and Russia

¶5. (SBU) NATO has become the most contentious issue in Ukraine's security/foreign affairs sphere; public opinion, based on outdated Soviet-era stereotypes and fanned by two electoral cycles, remains largely negative, even though the overwhelming majority of Ukraine's policy and defense experts support NATO membership as soon as possible. Within days of taking office, new FM Yatsenyuk visited Brussels (March 26) to meet with the NATO Secretary General as well as key EU officials; after his April 16 visit to Moscow, Yatsenyuk just concluded a good April 30-May 1 visit to Washington. PM Yanukovych has set the current government policy as supportive of cooperation with NATO, but not actively pursuing membership via a MAP or pursuing an information campaign that might help improve popular attitudes toward NATO.

¶6. (SBU) Relations with Russia, always complex, feature energy issues as the current dominant factor, not to Ukraine's advantage; the status of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and its lease on facilities in Crimea through 2017 is another key element in the bilateral relationship. The Yanukovych Government managed to conclude a positive price deal for the 2007 winter season soon after coming to power, although it is not clear if the price came at the cost of other national interests. While Russia clearly hopes to take control of Ukrainian energy infrastructure, the Ukrainian government has held the line against Russian acquisition of gas pipelines.

Defense Situation: Continued Reform, Difficult Environment

¶7. (SBU) Defense Minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko, one of two ministers (along with FM Yatsenyuk) nominated by Yushchenko, continues to push his aggressive defense reform program, amidst renewed efforts by some in the majority coalition to remove him for his outspoken loyalty to President Yushchenko's agenda. Unfortunately, lack of adequate funding, continued political uncertainty, and some misdirected policies have increased the level of frustration among senior military officers who are ordered to implement the programs. Major programs are moving forward, but not without problems and delays. The Armed Forces are creating professional NCOs, but many are choosing to leave military service because of dissatisfaction with pay and housing. Lack of combat training funds continues to take a toll on equipment, readiness, and morale. The uncertainty about the future composition of the Ministry of Defense and a possible change in speed or direction it may take with regard to Euro-Atlantic integration is causing many senior officers to

hunker down in the trenches until the dust settles. Hrytsenko continues to be outspoken regarding NATO membership and the lack of an adequate military budget, but has been able to work with the Yanukovych government.

¶18. (SBU) The Ukrainian General Staff and the Ground Forces have consistently reiterated their intent to continue modernization and reform along a path toward NATO MAP readiness independent of on-going political uncertainty. They have maintained that their objective is to meet NATO standards in anticipation that eventual political circumstances will permit receipt of a MAP.

¶19. (SBU) Despite cancellation of the land portion of SEA BREEZE (SB) 2006 exercise, the U.S. and Ukraine conducted two highly successful training exercises in 2006 (RAPID TRIDENT and ROUGH AND READY). In addition, lessons gleaned from Ex SB06 have led to much improved interagency planning and coordination among Ukrainian ministries concerning logistics and force protection.

¶10. (C) Under Ukrainian law, the participation in exercises by foreign units on Ukrainian territory requires parliamentary approval each year. With President Yushchenko's April 2 dissolution of the Parliament, the status of the 2007 foreign exercise law is currently uncertain. The Rada majority, which continued to work despite the presidential decree, approved the 2007 exercise authorization legislation April 6, but Yushchenko refuses to recognize any actions taken by the Rada after April 2. The Ukrainian constitution has provisions that will permit the Rada to promulgate a law, such as the exercise legislation, even if the president refuses to sign it, but the Rada has so far chosen not to use those provisions, instead preferring to hold the bill frozen in an effort to force the President to sign the law. Interim guidance from Commander EUCOM, based on our input and EUCOM J5 concurrence, is to continue planning for all exercises pending greater clarity in the political situation.

¶11. (SBU) During the on-going political turmoil surrounding the Rada dissolution and attendant street protests, the General Staff and Ground Forces have remained studiously quiet. No uniformed figure has made any public comments concerning divisive issues. Only Defense Minister Hrytsenko has commented on the situation. He has reiterated the constitutional role of President Yushchenko as Commander in Chief and "Guarantor of the Constitution," while making clear the armed forces will only act within the framework of the law.

Current Operations outside of Ukraine

¶12. (SBU) Ukraine currently has contingents and personnel serving in various operations in nine countries.

¶13. (SBU) Iraq. Ukraine maintains 43 personnel in Iraq currently; it is the only non-NATO country to have trainers involved in NATO's Iraq training mission. Forty personnel serve on headquarters staffs and in training of Iraqi forces. Three personnel serve in the NATO training mission training Iraqi security personnel. (Note: One of the three was severely wounded by an IED and has returned to Ukraine. End note.)

¶14. (SBU) Kosovo. Ukraine recently completed a rotation in which, for the first time, a formed and intact unit deployed as opposed to a unit which was created from personnel from several different units. Ukraine has a contingent of 182 personnel in Kosovo serving in the UKRPOLBAT and headquarters staffs. Two personnel serve on U.S. staffs.

¶15. (SBU) UN Peacekeeping Mission, Liberia. Ukraine maintains a helicopter unit in Liberia with a contingent of 301 personnel.

¶16. (SBU) Lebanon. The United Nations ordered Ukrainian Forces to depart Lebanon in April 2006 after a July 2005 UN

investigation of alleged corruption activities by the leadership of their engineering battalion serving in UNIFIL. This engineering battalion went to Lebanon under the Kuchma regime (prior to the Orange Revolution). Since this incident, Minister Hrytsenko has implemented several measures to prevent and guard against unlawful activities during deployed operations. Ukraine offered military troops for Lebanon to assist in their 2006 crisis but that offer was rejected by the UN. Currently, Ukraine is coordinating with Italy and Belgium to send medical personnel to Lebanon with Italian/Belgian forces.

¶17. (SBU) Afghanistan. Ukraine provided airlift to transport the Southeast European Brigade Headquarters to Afghanistan in February 2006. Ukraine has sent one medical doctor with the Lithuanian PRT and may send up to ten personnel. Due to its history in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghanistan war, in which Ukrainians bore a disproportionate brunt of Soviet casualties, Ukraine will not entertain sending combat troops.

¶18. (U) Visit Kyiv's classified website:
www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kiev.
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